

ANNUAL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE IN 2001/02 BY THE SOCIAL SERVICES INSPECTORATE

Report of the Director of Children Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report:

- Informs members of the findings of the Annual Review of Social Services Performance by the Social Services Inspectorate
- Highlights areas of particularly good performance, as identified by the Inspectorate
- Identifies action sheets within the CSF plan which address the areas identified by the inspectors.
- Informs members of the authorities Performance Rating for 2002

2. Summary of Report

2.1 This report presents the findings of the Social Services Inspectorate Annual Review Letter, a copy of which is attached as Annexe 1 of this report. This report only addresses those points that relate to CSF. The letter is also being presented to Adult Care Services Scrutiny Committee on the 27th June.

2.3 The Inspectors acknowledge “significant progress in children’s services following the formation of Children, Schools and Families” and commend the authority for its “commitment to strengthening the engagement of elected councillors in their corporate parenting role”. CSF is noted as having particular strengths in the areas of

- Child Protection
- Implementation of the Assessment Framework
- Adoption
- Consultation with and involvement of young people in planning and service delivery
- Commitment and support for disabled children and black and ethnic minority children

- 2.4 The impact of change associated with the move to CSF was recognised by the Inspectors, and within this context they identified the following as areas for development:
- Correlation between CSF investment in family support and spend on children looked after
 - Educational attainment of looked after children
 - Health of looked children after
 - Long term stability of looked after children
 - Need for a clear strategy in relation to child care placements and foster care recruitment given growing cost pressures and resource shortfalls
 - Recruitment and retention of Staff (a similar point was made for Adult Care Services)

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 The Social Services Inspectorate Annual Review Letter endorses the creation of CSF and acknowledges the progress that has been achieved in developing children's services in Hertfordshire. Strong performance is noted in a number of key areas.
- 3.2 CSF is aware of the areas of development noted by the Inspectors and has taken action to address the issues
- 3.3 All of the issues raised are covered by detailed action plans, covered in the CSF plan. These are attached in Annexe 2.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Social Services Inspectorate monitors local authority Social Services Departments through the following Processes:
- Monitoring position statements returned by local authorities, (in June and October)
 - Published Performance Assessment Framework, Performance Indicator data (submitted in October)
 - Completion of Quality Protects Management Action Plan (MAP), (submitted in December)
 - Results of the Children in Need survey (completed in October)
 - Annual Review Meeting (held in March)
 - Informal discussions with authorities, and the results of inspections, throughout the year.
- 1.2 Following the Annual Review the Inspectors formally write to authorities setting out their view of performance, identifying strengths and areas for development in the forthcoming year.
- 1.3 Authorities are required to present the letter to an appropriate meeting of the council within two months of the receipt of the letter, and make it available to members of the public at the same time.
- 1.4 The evidence summarised in the letter is used, in conjunction with the processes outlined above to determine the councils' Performance rating.
- 1.5 CSF received a performance rating of two stars (on a zero to three star scale) and was judged as serving most of the people well with promising prospects for improvement

2 Conclusions of the Letter:

- 2.1 The Inspectors view the development of CSF as a positive step and note commendable practice in relation to core business such as child protection and adoption, where CSF has achieved exceptional results. They were particularly pleased at the strong commitment to involvement of children and young people by all levels of the authority, including members.
- 2.2 The authority as a whole was commended for good evidence of interagency working and commitment to partnership working. The disability scrutiny process and strategy group are clear examples of this
- 2.3 The inspectors advise CSF of areas for future development throughout the forthcoming year, noting outcomes for looked after children as an area for concentration. Members will be aware that this area is already a focus of activity. Our proposals outlined in the CSF plan were discussed with the inspectors and they expressed confidence in our plans for improvement.

- 2.4 Recruitment and retention difficulties were also identified as an area that requires a strategic response. Members will be aware that this problem is not unique to CSF and our actions in this area are outlined within the CSF plan

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 This report is for member information only so there are no immediate financial implications, however the report highlights many of the pressures within the social care field; addressing these may have future financial implications

4 Background information used by the author in compiling this report.

- 4.1 Letter from Social Services Inspectorate dated 10th April 2002, attached as appendix 1.

Annexe 2:

Detailed Action plans in response to issues raised by Inspectors can be found in the CSF Plan 2002/03 as follows

AREA	ACTION SHEETS
Child Protection	5.1.1, 5.2.8
Assessment Framework	5.1.2
Foster Care and Adoption	5.3, 5.3.2,
Participation of young people	7.3.1, 7.3.3
Disability	4.4.1, 4.4.2 4.4.4, 4.4.5 4.4.6
Balance between investment of Family Support and looked after children	8.2.2 An additional action sheet is being compiled for 2002-03
Educational Attainment of Looked After Children	5.4.3, 5.4.4, 5.5.3,5.5.2,
Health of Looked After Children	5.5.1, 5.5.6
Long Term stability of Children looked after	5.3.1, 5.3.2
Strategy in relation to external, placements and foster care recruitment	5.3.1, 4.6.9
Recruitment and Retention	2.2.3, 2.2.6